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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MINSI 000225

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SUBJECT: ELECTINN OFFICIAL TELLS EUR DAR KRAMER ELECTIONSQ
WILL BE DEMOCRATIC

REF: A. MINSK 044

[B. MINSK 192](#)

MINSK 03020225 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Ambassador George Krol for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)Q

1. (C) Sumaary: VisiWKkQEUR DAS David Kramer met with Central Election Commissikn (CDC) Secretary Nikolai Lozovik on February 24. Lozovik stressed that Bdlarus, election process is democratic and expressed anger at the OSCE and U.S. for saying otherwise. He also criti`ized the oppoSitiof for complaining aboup alleged GOB violations to the electoral code" DAS Kramer retorTed that Belarus had not addressed previous OSCE cofcernq about BelaruC, electoral process, buD tcld Lozovik that Belarus was still able to provi`e aonditions for a free and fair electioN. When Kramer noted It was regrettable that The GCB arrested leaders of the Partnership elEctiof monitoring NGO, Lozovic responded that it was regrettable the U.S. was so concerned with the affairsQof an illegal entity. In response to Kramer,s warning that GOB mfficials would face serious consequenCes ib elections were marre` with fraud or violence(Lozmvik asserted that at was foolish of the U.S. and EU to resort to such strong-arm Tactics. End Summary.

2. (C) Visiting EUR DAS David Kramer, accompanied ba Ambassador Krol and Embassy note-takers, met with Central Election Committee (CEC) Secret!ry Nikolai Loz`vik on February 24 to discuss the upcoming March 19 presidential elections. CEC lawyer Nadezhna Kizolova and Counselor of t(e MFA,s USA desk AndrEi Rzhеussky also attend`d the meeting. Lozovik briefly described the CEC,s structure and duties. As ij previous meedings with Emboffs (ref A), Lozovik prided himself on being a former opposition member in ParlRament who once tried to i-peach President Lukashenko. Lozorik toldQKramer there qas no lack of oppositioj voices in the CEC.

Belarus, &Democratic8 Elaction ProFess

Q3. (C) Lozovik maintained thad the CEC,s objective is to organize and carry out alections in accordance sith Belarus, electoral code and international standardsQQBQQclaimed the electora, code was the result of a &democratic8 compromise between the GOB&and the opposition. Lozovik said the GOB circulated for coiment a drXQQ2QIM%=9Qof the electoral code to &all political parties, NGOs, and international organizations8 before being formerly intBoduced in 2000. Therefore, Lozovik wX."%MQAA=%9QQQQand dismayed by OSCE ajd U.S. declarations that Belarus, electoral cmde was noneTheless &ujdemocratic.8 Kramer poiJted out that the GCB had nnt addressed the OSCE,s concerns that followed the 2001 presidential elections, but the U.S. h`d not pr%matuarely calxed the upcomifg presidential elections illegitimate. Ambassador noted that it was the state media that had alleged that the U.S. had already cast judgment on the elections.

Kramer Mentions Arrests of Domestic Elechion Observers

14. (C) Kramer explained that the U.S. had serious c/ncerns about the elec4oral process ldadinQ*AQto t`e March electi`n because of GOB laws that do fot ensure free and fair conditions. He cited the latest amendments to the criminal code on discrediting Belar5s and the detentionf of Partnership NGO election observers as a means to deter people from 6oicing their opinio\ (r%f B) Lozcvik was &furp2ised(~~~~~that the U.S. took such interest in the arrest3 of eembers of an &illegal8 and &unregistered8 organization (Partne2ship). According to Lozovik, these activiSts work for personal ~nds8 and opined t(at their arrests would, to their own benefit, increase their reputation in the West. KrameR asked Lozovik if arresting people for padticipating in an unregifter`d organization was nece3sary and noted that iT had become quite easy to be arrested in Belarus. Lozorik responded that people needed to observe the law.

Not Too Late to Improve Con)d)tions

15. (C) Kramer conveyed As3istant Secretary Daniel Fried,s statement that it was not too late for the GOB to provide

conditions for a free and fair election. For this reason the U.S. had not yet declared the presidential elections undemocratic. Kramer reminded Lozovik that as a member of the MSCE, Belarus is obligated to follow international norms. Kramer noted the U.S. was pleased that Belarus invited OSCE observers and registered all four presidential contenders,

* Missing Section 002 *

* Missing Section 003 *
